REMARKS

The Examiner will see that no claim amendments have been made in this response. Applicants respectfully believe that the Examiner is mistaken in his interpretation of Saijonmaa (US 5,706,285) and that the application is allowable in its present form.

The Examiner argues that "Saijonmaa teaches overhead bytes, therefore it would have been obvious to understand the overhead bytes that is included in the overhead section [of the SDH virtual container] not in the payload [of the SDH virtual container]". Applicants respectfully believe this is incorrect.

The "overhead bytes" described in Saijonmaa are "introduced in front of the cell blocks for cell synchronization to be performed at the receiver" (see column 5, lines 5 to 7 and 34 to 35). This is illustrated in figures 3 and 4. The fact that Saijonmaa describes this data as "overhead bytes" does _not_ mean that the data is equivalent to or included in the path overheads of the SDH virtual containers. As already argued in the previous response, applicants firmly believe that Saijonmaa merely discloses that overhead bytes are included in the _payloads_ of SDH virtual containers.

Looking at figures 3 and 4, and the passages of the description spanning column 5, lines 1 to 50, the Examiner will see that overhead bytes OH_1 - OH_N are introduced in front of cell blocks CB. The cell blocks are formed from the data stream received (see column 5, lines 3 to 4). In other words, the cell blocks contain the data to be transmitted. It is clearly implicit in Saijonmaa that this data to be transmitted is included in the payloads of SDH virtual containers and not in the path overhead. Accordingly, applicants firmly believe that the overhead bytes OH_1 - OH_N which are introduced in front of the cell blocks, are also included in the payload of SDH virtual containers.
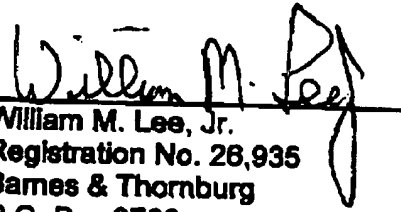
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Furthermore, Saijonmaa teaches that the overhead bytes "occur at intervals of L bytes with each separate transmission signal" (column 5, line 23 to 25) and that, for example, with "standard ATM cells, L is 53 bytes and the overhead byte OH occurs in the transmission signal at intervals of 54 bytes" (column 5, lines 30 to 40). Thus, Siajonmaa teaches that the overhead bytes are inserted within the data stream at regular or periodic intervals. It is quite clear that the data stream is included in the payload of the SDH virtual containers, and since the overhead bytes are inserted within the data stream, it must follow as a matter of logic that the overhead bytes are therefore included in the payloads of the SDH virtual containers and not in the path overhead.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully, but firmly, submit that there is no teaching whatsoever in Saijonmaa of including association data in the path overheads of SDH virtual containers. The advantages of using the path overhead, as opposed to the payload, have already been described in the previous response.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider the present application, and look forward to receiving a notice of allowance in due course. The indicated allowability of certain claims is gratefully acknowledged, but for the reasons above, all claims are believed to be in condition for allowance.

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Respectfully submitted,

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